

# Questions and Answers about the Proposed 2012 Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Herd Gather

## ***Why is the BLM proposing to gather the Pryor herd?***

The proposed gather is necessary to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance and maintain multiple use relationships including a variety of resources and uses, such as wildlife, wilderness values, recreation, cultural, as well as wild horses on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) over the next several years. Vegetation monitoring data shows the PMWHR does not have the capacity to sustain the current wild horse population over the long-term with their current use patterns on healthy rangelands. We have been hearing statements that the range is in excellent shape. This is simply not true. Several studies over the past ten years show that parts of the range are in very poor condition and over-utilized primarily by wild horses. For instance, the more beautiful wildflowers you see dominating the upper elevation areas indicate there are less grasses present in the system that are needed to sustain the herd's health. These range studies were comprehensive and quantified. Range monitoring data collected since the 2009 gather continues to re-affirm these findings from 17 total years of rangeland monitoring. The BLM is prohibited from allowing a "deterioration of the range associated with an over-population" (Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 as amended).

## ***When could a possible gather take place?***

The gather would begin no sooner than June of 2012. Specific dates would be set as the process moves forward and as weather conditions allow.

## ***What is the current population of the herd?***

The current wild horse population on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) is approximately 170 adult wild horses. This is due to recruitment of the 2011 foals that had a 100% survival rate. Therefore, the population exceeds the established Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 90-120 horses, excluding the current year foals. Think about the amount of hay and pasture your horse at home goes through and you begin to understand why adhering to the established AML is critical. Essentially, a single wild horse on the PMWHR is estimated to utilize 300-400 acres for feed per year.

## ***How many excess wild horses are anticipated to be removed?***

The BLM's goal would be to get the current number of animals within the AML. With the current population at around 170 horses, this number could be 50 horses.

***How do you propose to gather the excess wild horses?***

Because of their notoriety, the Pryor herd is actually quite tame. The preferred alternative proposes a combination of bait trapping, water trapping, and herding due to the smaller number of excess horses. The Environmental Assessment (EA) proposes that water or a food source is placed inside a paneled area. Once a horse walks in the area, a paneled gate is closed behind it.

***Why is a helicopter gather not being proposed?***

The current number of excess horses within the herd is not at a level that requires the need for a helicopter gather – yet. In subsequent years, if the BLM cannot successfully gather wild horses using an alternative to a helicopter, this method may become necessary.

***What will happen to the excess horses once you gather and remove them?***

Any excess wild horses would be offered for adoption to only qualified and BLM-approved adopters. Before the adoption, the horses will be examined by veterinarians, freeze-marked, and vaccinated. Due to the nature of this gather, the adoption(s) could be carried out as several small events or one large event depending on the gather efficacy. Adoption will be announced as the gather progresses and the public will be notified at least 2-3 weeks prior to the adoption(s).

***Note: The BLM does not sell any wild horses or burros to slaughterhouses or to "killer buyers."***

***Will the removal affect the genetic viability of the herd?***

Genetic testing conducted by Dr. Gus Cothran between 1991-2010 show that the “current levels of genetic diversity within the Pryor Mountain herd are relatively high for a wild horse population, are well above the mean for domestic breeds, and have been steady during the period of the studies.” These results occurred after several years of gathers on the range.

Approximately 700 wild horses have been removed from the PHWHR since 1968.

***When was the last gather in the PMWHR and how many excess animals were removed during that gather?***

September 2009. Twenty-eight excess wild horses were removed from the PMWHR and 29 excess wild horses removed that resided outside the HMA.

***How does the BLM use fertility control on the PMWHR?***

Porcine zona pellucida (PZP), a fertility control drug, has been implemented on the PMWHR since 2001. Since 2010, between 70-80% of the mares within the PMWHR herd received fertility treatment. This is the highest percentage of mares ever treated within this particular herd. Over the next five years, the BLM's goal is to reach an 80% to 85% treatment rate utilizing liquid PZP.